

E 361

.C732

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005082833







Deck 12  
677

# NARRATIVE

OF THE LIFE OF

## GENERAL LESLIE COMBS:

## EMBRACING

## INCIDENTS IN THE EARLY HISTORY

OF THE

## NORTHWESTERN TERRITORY.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY J. T. AND LEM. TOWERS.

1855.

E 361  
.C732



82. 563



# NARRATIVE

OF THE

## LIFE OF GENERAL LESLIE COMBS,

OF KENTUCKY,

EMBRACING INCIDENTS IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE NORTH-  
WESTERN TERRITORY.

THE biography of men in the Republic who have raised themselves by their own unaided talents and energies above the level of the general mass of the community in which their lot has been cast, must be both entertaining and instructive to their fellow-countrymen. Doubly instructive and profitable, in a more extended view, are these personal histories, when they relate to the lives and fortunes of those who may be regarded as representative men—types of classes that constitute essential or important elements in our national character, and which, though somewhat heterogeneous in their origin and diverse in their features, have yet become, through the harmonizing and fostering influences of our republican institutions, consolidated and blended into a congruous whole, known and recognized throughout the world, distinctively as the American character.

Nor are these essential and characteristic elements referable solely to peculiar national origins. On the contrary, local and other circumstances, irrespective of nationalities, have formed some of the most distinctive, and, in a national point of view, important of these elements. Of this kind were the circumstances attending the early settlement of our Western country; circumstances which overbore and nearly obliterated all distinctions of national origin, blending and consolidating all such elements in the comprehensive, distinctive national one, represented by the Western hunter, pioneer and settler, as combined in the same individual.

Nurtured amidst stirring scenes, and accustomed from early childhood to a life of activity, hardship, exposure, and thrilling

adventure—hence a hardy, enterprising, bold, and fearless race; and leading the free and untrammelled life of the backwoods, and breathing from infancy the atmosphere of unrestrained freedom and independence—hence a frank, generous, hospitable race, endued with an unsophisticated and plain sense of right, with a ready disposition to uphold and protect it, as well as a keen native sense of wrong, and an impulsive instinct to repel and redress it; the men of this race have ever been foremost, whether in extending the area of civilization and of the Republic, by felling the forest and subduing the rank prairie, or in defending our national rights and avenging our national wrongs on the field of battle.

It was this race, represented by an speaking through a Henry Clay and others of that stamp, which aroused our Government to a declaration of war, to vindicate our violated national rights on the ocean early in the present century; and it was this race themselves, who, at the call of their country, rushed with an unexampled unanimity and alacrity to the field, while in some parts of the country, but too many of the more immediate neighbors and kindred of those citizens whose rights of person or property on the sea had been outraged, not only refused to respond to this national call, but sought to thwart the purposes of the Government, by opposing its measures adopted for the purpose of obtaining redress, in some instances, by acts little short of treason. And it is to the descendants of this race, already numbering millions of hardy, unflinching republicans, to which our country must look for a patriotic

and generous support of its institutions, as a united whole, whenever the violence of ultra-factions in the extreme North or South, impelled by whatever motives, shall seek to overturn the institutions established by our revolutionary forefathers. It is then that the people of the great West, the descendants of the pioneer, hunter race, will—as one of her representatives declared in his place in a late Congress—*have something to say* on the final question of union or disunion.

As being a worthy representative of this race, and also one whose early life and adventures are intimately connected with an interesting and instructive, but now almost forgotten portion of our national history, as relating to the West, we shall depart somewhat from our ordinary practice, and allow ourselves more space and latitude than usual, in detailing the personal narrative of the subject of the present memoir.

GENERAL LESLIE COMBS is descended, on the side of his mother, whose maiden name was SARAH RICHARDSON, from a respectable Quaker family of Maryland, connected by blood with the Thomases and Snowdens. His father was by birth a Virginian, and served as a subaltern officer in the revolutionary army under Washington, at the siege of Yorktown and capture of Lord Cornwallis. He soon afterwards emigrated to Kentucky, and was engaged in all those dangerous and sometimes bloody scenes which resulted in driving out the Indians, and devoting that rich and beautiful region to the cause and purposes of civilization.

Both his parents have been dead for several years; and as their youngest of twelve children, he has erected over their humble graves, within a few miles of Boonsboro, appropriate tombstones. On his father's are inscribed the simple facts, that he was a "*Revolutionary Officer and a Hunter of Kentucky.*" A simple, affecting, and suggestive tribute to the unpretending but sterling worth of one of that class of men which has impressed its characteristic traits as honorably as it has indelibly on our national character: "a hunter of Kentucky;" one of that fearless, enterprising, self-relying, frank and generous race, which, as the hardy pioneer of civilization in our Western savage wilds, has extended the area of the Republic over those once almost illimitable forests and prairies, and, by its valor and

devotion to country, has contributed so much to our national greatness and fame.

Seven only of his children survived him; among whom was divided his *hundred-acre farm* in Clark county, which had furnished his only support in raising his large family. Of course their means and opportunities of education were limited; but fortunately for the subject of this memoir, when he was but ten or eleven years of age, the Rev. JOHN LYLE, a Presbyterian clergyman, opened a school of a higher order than was usual in the country in those days; and in it he was taught the Latin language, as well as English grammar, geography, and the lower branches of mathematics. His progress in all his studies was rapid, and he soon became the pet of his venerable instructor, as he was the pride of his aged parents.

This state of things continued about three years, when Mr. Lyle removed to a neighboring county; and for a time our young scholar was compelled to remain at home, and assisted in cultivating the farm. The great anxiety, however, of both his parents to give him as liberal an education as possible, was soon gratified by their being able to place him in the family of a French gentleman residing near Ashland, whose lady taught a few scholars, and under whose instruction he remained for a year; his time being mainly devoted to the acquisition of her native language. That admirable lady is yet alive, and still residing in her humble home, one of her daughters having married a son of Henry Clay.

Shortly after returning home, he was placed as the junior deputy in the clerk's office of Hon. S. H. Woodson, in Jessamine county, and was residing there, when the last war was declared against Great Britain. The excitement in Kentucky, on the occurrence of that event, pervaded all ages and classes.

Even those who are old enough to remember the events of these times, but who were born and have always lived in the eastern portions of the country, can have little idea of the intensity of feeling aroused by this event among the hardy inhabitants of Kentucky and the frontier portions of the north-western country. In that region the interval between the close of the war of the Revolution and the declaration of the second war with the same power, had witnessed an almost uninterrupted struggle between



the Western pioneer settlers and the native tribes of those regions, who, as was well known, were continually instigated and paid by British agents to harass and devastate our infant settlements. Hence the national animosity against the mother country excited by the War of Independence, so far from having been allayed or effaced in those parts, as was the case to a considerable extent in the East, by the lapse of thirty years of peace, nominal as regarded the Western frontier, had, on the contrary, been gradually increasing and becoming intensified down to the very moment of the declaration of war in 1812. This feeling reached its acme when that same power whose agents had so long been inciting the savages to ruthless forays on the defenceless and peaceful settlements, now entered into alliances with them, and, by offering premiums for the scalps of men, women, and children, incited them to redoubled zeal in the prosecution of their instinctive and inhuman mode of warfare.

A series of revolting atrocities perpetrated early in the war by the savages, many of them under the very eye, and with the approval or connivance of the commanders of their British allies, especially of the notorious Colonel, and for these his acts promoted or brevetted General Proctor, whose memory the voice of outraged humanity will consign to eternal infamy, aroused the whole Western country to a pitch of intense excitement, which manifested itself in a universal cry for revenge, and a spontaneous rush to the field.\*

\* "Exasperated to madness by the failure of their attempt, September 4, 1812, on Fort Harrison, [defended by Captain Zachary Taylor,] a considerable party of Indians now made an irruption into the settlements on the Pigeon Roost fork of White river, where they barbarously massacred twenty-one of the inhabitants, many of them women and children. The children had their brains knocked out against trees; and one woman, who was pregnant, was ripped open, and her unborn infant taken from her, and its brains knocked out. However, this was but a small matter; it amounted to no essential injury; it was all for the best, as it was done by the disciples of the *Wabash Prophet*, who was in a close and holy alliance with George the Third, *defender of the faith*, and *legitimate sovereign of the Bible Society nation*, which is the bulwark of our most holy religion. Yet it excited the indignation of the uncivilized republican infidels in the neighboring settlements of Indiana and Kentucky."—*McAfee, History of the late War in the Western Country*, pp. 154-5.

It cannot therefore be wondered at, that the son of an old soldier and hunter, who had often listened of a winter evening to his father's thrilling details of Indian fights, and ambuscades, and hairbreadth escapes, should be infected with the contagion, and long, boy as he was, to throw away his pen and seize some implement of war.

Young Leslie Combs had just passed his eighteenth birthday, and was, by law, subject to militia duty, although he had not been inscribed on any muster-roll. Kentucky was called upon for several thousand troops, and he hoped to be one of the soldiers enlisted in the great cause of "sailors' rights and free trade with all the world," in defiance of Britain's proud, insulting claim, as mistress of the seas, to insult our flag and seize our seamen. He accordingly borrowed a fowling piece, and set himself to work to acquire the manual exercise as taught by *Baron Steuben*, then the only approved master in such matters. It was supposed that a draft would be necessary, but, instead of that, there were more volunteers than were required to fill the quota of Kentucky, and young Leslie's parents objected to his going, inasmuch as two of his elder brothers had previously joined the troops ordered to the northern frontier, under General Winchester. It was not long after they marched, however, before his continued and earnest importunities, sometimes urged with tears in his eyes, prevailed upon them to let him go. Equipping himself as a private of cavalry as speedily as possible, about a month after the army marched from Georgetown, Kentucky, he started alone on their track, hoping to overtake them in time to partake of their glorious triumphs in Canada, for, like the rest, he never dreamed of disaster and defeat. "I shall never forget," to quote his words in after years, "the parting scene with my beloved and venerated mother, in which she reminded me of my father's history, and her own trials and dangers in the early settlement of Kentucky, and closed by saying to me, 'as I had resolved to become a soldier, I must never disgrace my parents by running from danger;—to die rather than fail to do my duty.' This injunction was ever present to me afterwards, in the midst of dangers and difficulties of which I had then formed no idea, and stimulated me to deeds that I might otherwise, per-

aps, have hesitated to undertake and perform."

Here properly closes what may be termed the first chapter of his personal history; because from this time he threw off boyhood, and entered upon a career more befitting manhood.

Before proceeding with the personal narrative of our subject, and in order to enable the reader the better to understand the scenes of danger and suffering through which he passed during the unfortunate campaigns of 1812-13, we will briefly sketch the situation of the great North-western Territory, now composing some six or seven sovereign States of this great republican confederacy. From just beyond Urbana and Dayton, in western Ohio, to the northern lakes in one direction, and the Mississippi river in another, was one unbroken wilderness, inhabited only by Indians and wild beast, with the exception of a few scattering settlements on some of the principal rivers, at great distances from each other. There was a small fort at Detroit, one at Mackinac, and one at Chicago, besides Forts Wayne and Harrison, each garrisoned by a few regular troops. *William Hull* was Governor of the Territory of Michigan, and *William Henry Harrison* of Indiana. In view of the growing difficulties with Great Britain in the spring of 1812, Governor Hull received the appointment of Brigadier General in the army of the United States, and was sent to Ohio to take command of the forces ordered to Detroit to protect that frontier in case of war. These consisted of the fourth regiment of regulars, under Colonel Miller, and three regiments of Ohio volunteers, under Colonels Duncan McArthur, Lewis Cass, and James Findlay. War was declared on the 18th June, 1812, while General Hull was on his tardy march through the northern swamps of Ohio towards Detroit. His baggage, which had been sent by way of the lake, was captured in attempting to pass Malden, at the mouth of the Detroit river. He himself soon afterwards reached Detroit, issued his famous proclamation, and talked largely of overrunning Upper Canada, for effecting which object he had ample forces under his command; instead of doing which, however, he very soon retreated back to the American shore, and on the 16th August, disgracefully surren-

dered his army and the whole of Michigan Territory to General Brock, commanding the British forces on that frontier.

Mackinaw had been forced to capitulate a month earlier, and Chicago had been abandoned on the 15th of August, and its garrison murdered or captured by a large force of Indians, who had received news of Hull's retreat from Canada, and thereupon resolved to unite with the British against us, as they had been previously urged to do by Tecumseh, then rising into power among the northern tribes on this side of the American and British boundary line.

Thus our whole frontier from Lake Erie to the Mississippi river was left utterly undefended except by two small forts—*Wayne* and *Harrison*—one at the junction of the St. Joseph and St. Mary rivers, forming the *Maumee of the Lake*, the other on the far-distant Wabash. Both were defended block-houses and wooden pickets, both were attacked by the Indians at about the same time, and Captain *Zack Taylor*, defending Fort Harrison, as we have before intimated, with most unflinching heroism, laid the foundation of that subsequent career of military glory and self-devotion, which finally elevated him to the Presidential office.

Three regiments of Kentucky volunteers, under the command of Colonels *Scott*, *Lewis* and *Allen*, and one regiment of regulars, under Colonel *Wells*, had, in the mean time, been ordered to the north-western frontier, to re-enforce General Hull. The former rendezvoused at Georgetown on the 16th August, and after being addressed by the old veteran, General Charles Scott, then Governor of Kentucky, and by *Henry Clay*, were mustered into the service of the United States. The best blood of Kentucky, the sons of the old hunters and Indian fighters, could be found in this little army. Two members of Congress were among the privates in the ranks. Little did they imagine, while listening to the soul-stirring appeals of the great Kentucky orator, that, instead of marching to Canada to aid in its conquest, on that very day the white flag of disgraceful surrender had been hung out by the coward or the traitor Hull from the battlements of Detroit; and that their own career of anticipated victories and glory would terminate in disaster, as it did, on the bloody battle-field

of Raisin, on the following 22d day of January. General James Winchester had command of this force, and marched on the 17th by way of *Cincinnati*, (then a small town on the Ohio river, opposite to Newport,) towards the north-western frontier; and it was not until they had passed the Kentucky border that the news of Hull's surrender reached them.

Governor *Harrison* had acquired very considerable fame by his glorious victory at Tippecanoe the preceeding November, and was in Kentucky at that time on a visit. So soon as the events just above related were communicated to the Government at Washington, three or four additional regiments of volunteers were ordered from Kentucky, and the Governor of Kentucky prevailed on Governor Harrison to accept the office of Major-General, and to hasten with the forces then in the field, and a large body of mounted Kentucky militia, to the relief of Fort Wayne.

This, it will be remembered, he accomplished, and forced the Indians and their British auxiliaries to retreat precipitately towards Canada, without daring to engage him in battle.

By selling a small piece of land (all he had on earth) devised to him by a deceased elder brother, young Combs soon completed his outfit as a volunteer, and, armed with holsters and broadsword, with only fifteen dollars in his pocket, he started for the north-western army, which was then marching with all possible speed towards the frontiers of Ohio, in order to reinforce General Hull. Never having been forty miles from home before this time, young and inexperienced as he was, nothing but his burning zeal for the cause to which he had devoted himself could have sustained him against all the perils and hardships of his long journey. When he arrived at Piqua, beyond Dayton, he found crowds of Indians, men, women, and children, principally from the neighboring Shawnee villages, who were besieging the commissary's and quartermaster's apartments for food, blankets, and ammunition. He had never before seen such an array of yellow-skinned, and was gratified to find at the same place several companies of mounted thirty-day volunteers, hastening to the frontiers after the news of Hull's surrender reached Ohio and Kentucky; in company with

whom he proceeded through the wilderness to St. Mary's, distant twenty or thirty miles. At that place he met General Harrison on his return from the relief of Fort Wayne, after turning over his command to General Winchester, of the regular army. The next day and night, in company with three or four friends, he made the journey to Fort Wayne, distant about sixty miles, through an unbroken wilderness, infested with hostile savages; and there found the troops in motion towards Old Fort Defiance, at the junction of the Maumee and Auglaise rivers, and was attached by general orders as a cadet to the first regiment of Kentucky Volunteers, under Colonel Scott. In this capacity he continued to do duty the remainder of the campaign, going out on all scouting-parties, and thus becoming well acquainted with the whole surrounding country. Some of them were attended with great hazard, and all of them with extra fatigue and hardship, even when compared with the starved and naked condition of all that wing of the army.

As these events have no doubt long since passed from the memories of those not immediately connected with them, and the principal history of them, written by Colonel McAfee, is nearly out of print, we take leave to quote from his authentic work, "The History of the late War in the Western Country," printed in 1816, the following passages, first remarking that the left wing of the north-western army, under General Winchester, (General Harrison having some weeks before received the appointment of Major-General from the President of the United States, and assumed the chief command,) was encamped six miles below Old Fort Defiance, on the Maumee:

"About the first of November they became extremely sickly. The typhus fever raged with violence, so that sometimes three or four would die in a day. Upwards of three hundred were daily on the sick-list; and so discouraging was the prospect of advancing, that about the first of December they were ordered to build huts for their accommodation. Many were so entirely destitute of shoes and other clothing, that they must have frozen if they had been obliged to march any distance; and sometimes the whole army would be for many days entirely without flour." (pp. 183-4.)

"From the 10th to the 22d of this month, (December,) the camp was without flour, and for some time before they had only half rations; poor beef and hickory roots were their only sub-



sistence. At the same time, fevers and other diseases raged in almost every tent, in which the sick were exposed not only to hunger, but to the inclemency of the season." (Vide pp. 155-6.)

General Winchester had received orders from General Harrison, as soon as he had accumulated twenty days' provisions, to advance to the rapids, forty-four miles lower down the river than his present camp, and to commence building huts, to induce the enemy to believe he was going into winter-quarters. It was indispensable to occupy the rapids, the subsequent site of Fort Meigs, with a force sufficiently strong to protect the provisions, stores, and munitions of war, which were to be forwarded from the other wings of the army, located at Fort McArthur and Upper Sandusky, previous to a contemplated rapid movement upon Malden and Detroit. From the 22d to the 30th of December, active preparations were being made for this change of position, which was to bring the American forces so much nearer to the enemy. The river being frozen over, they were obliged to take the baggage on their backs, or on rickety sleds, to be hauled by the men, for all their horses which had not been sent into the interior in October or November, had starved to death.

"Having provided for the sick, and assigned guards to attend and protect them, the march for the rapids was commenced on the 30th December. At the same time, Mr. Leslie Combs, a young man of intelligence and enterprise from Kentucky, who had joined the army as a volunteer on its march from Fort Wayne to Fort Defiance, accompanied by Mr. A. Riddle, as a guide, was sent with dispatches to inform the commander-in-chief (General Harrison) of this movement, in order that provisions and reinforcements might be forwarded as soon as possible. General Winchester expected to be met by these at the rapids by the 12th of January. This, however, was prevented by an immense fall of snow, which, as Mr. Combs had to traverse *on foot* a pathless wilderness of more than one hundred miles in extent, retarded him for four or five days longer in reaching even the first point of destination, (Fort McArthur,) than would otherwise have been necessary to perform the whole route."—*McAfee*, p. 201.

These dispatches consisted of a brief note, introducing young Combs to General Harrison, "as a youth whose information as to the intended movements of General Winchester could be entirely relied upon;" and at the same time he was fully possessed by General Winchester, confidentially, of all

his intentions, which it was deemed unsafe to intrust to paper, inasmuch as his journey was to be through a region full of savages, who might take his scalp and capture his papers. These confidential communications, intrusted to him alone, and by him duly made to General Harrison, enabled him, in 1840, to vindicate the old hero of Tippecanoe with entire success, before the American people, against the foul aspersion cast upon him by his enemies in reference to the subsequent disastrous defeat of General Winchester at the river Raisin, on the 22d January, 1813.

What he suffered on this tramp may be imagined, but cannot well be described. He had been accustomed only to wear his sword, after sending his horse to the interior, and their daily mareling had ceased for some two months. He was on this occasion loaded with a heavy musket and accoutrements, in addition to a blanket and four days' provisions on his back. The snow commenced falling on the morning of the 31st December, and continued without intermission two days and nights, so that on the third day of their journey, young Combs and his companion found it over two feet deep. They were in a dense forest, without path or compass, and only guided by the unerring skill of his companion, who had been some fifteen years in early life a captive among the Indians in this region, and was well skilled in all their ways and customs. Several nights they encamped in the black swamp, and could not find a place to lie down and rest, even on the snow, but were compelled to sit up all night with a small fire at their feet, made of such old brush as they could collect, and, wrapping themselves in their blankets, shivering through the long hours till daylight enabled them again to resume their tiresome march. On the sixth day, their four days' provision was entirely exhausted, and they had early put themselves on short allowance. Young Combs was extremely ill nearly all night, so much so, that it was concluded that Riddle must leave him in the morning to his fate, and for himself make the best of his way to the nearest settlement or fort, and endeavor to save Combs, if he should survive till his return. Fortunately for our young volunteer, his natural strength of constitution, and, it may be added, *his unflinching re-*

*solution never to stop while he could walk*, overcame his disease, and he kept moving for three days and nights longer, without a mouthful of food for either himself or his companion, except slippery elm bark. On the ninth evening, after dark, they reached Fort McArthur, then under command of General Tupper.

Every attention was paid to young Combs by General Tupper and his staff, on his arrival at the head-quarters of that general. But his sufferings had been so great, that he was prostrated for days afterwards on a bed of sickness; as, in addition to hunger and fatigue, his feet were badly frost-bitten, and his arm joints stiffened with rheumatic pains, from which he has never since recovered. Being unable to proceed to Upper Sandusky, where General Harrison was posted, his dispatches were conveyed to him, with a brief letter from himself, by a special messenger on horseback, the day after his arrival at Fort McArthur.

As soon as it was considered safe for him to leave his quarters, he was furnished with a sled, two horses, and a driver, and proceeded as speedily as possible through the snow to the rapids, distant about ninety or one hundred miles by way of Hull's trace, which place he reached on the evening of the 19th of January, expecting to find General Winchester's army encamped there, as that general had told him he would be. Instead of this, he met the news of Colonel Lewis's glorious victory of the 18th, at river Raisin, over the British and Indians, thirty-six miles in advance of the rapids, and about twenty miles only from Malden, the head quarters of the British army in Upper Canada. Disappointed and mortified that a battle had been fought in his absence, and apprehending the speedy recurrence of another similar event of a more conclusive character, as General Winchester had himself gone on with the flower of his forces that morning, to reinforce Colonel Lewis; without waiting for General Harrison, who was expected in a day or two, with a portion of the right wing of the army, he determined to lose no time in reporting himself at head-quarters. Accordingly on the 20th, in the evening, he set off on foot, with his blanket and one day's rations on his back, and without his old heavy mus-

ket, to overtake Major Cotgreve's battalion, which was understood to have been hurried forward by General Harrison from Lower Sandusky, with two or three pieces of light artillery, in the direction of the river Raisin. He soon accomplished his object, as the Maumee was frozen over from shore to shore, and he could travel on the ice with much greater rapidity than by land through the deep crusted snow.

With them he found another young Kentuckian, with a small pony, loaded with his baggage and provisions, proceeding to join his regiment, from which he had been separated for some time. The night of the 21st, was bright, clear, and beautiful, but intensely cold, with a full moon shining; and at two o'clock his newly found companion and himself determined to make an effort to reach the river Raisin before the next night. So anxious were they to accomplish this purpose, that they forgot for the time their being on hostile ground, as recognized by Hull in his articles of capitulation, and that there were one or two villages intervening between them and their point of destination. Whether they should encounter in them friend or foes, and how many murdering Pottawatamies might be prowling through the forests, were not taken into account; onward they resolved to go, and at all hazards.

After twelve or thirteen hours' laborious trudging through the snow and ice, one leading and the other driving their little half-starved poney; they arrived at a small village about ten miles from the river Raisin, to witness a scene of consternation and distress never before presented to their view. An American soldier, without hat, coat, or shoes, had just arrived from the disastrous field of Raisin, with an exaggerated account of that bloody affair, and the whole population were preparing to fly towards the American army, supposed to be approaching under General Harrison, by way of the ice on the lake and river. While hesitating whether to believe this most painful news, and return, or treat it as the tale of a coward, and proceed to the scene of action, they discovered another fugitive in the distant prairie approaching them, who, on his arrival, confirmed all they had just heard, with the additional fact, that the Indians were pursuing the



flying troops under Winchester and Lewis, in the direction towards their present location. In a very short space of time, with the exception of a few Canadian Frenchmen and one family of whom we shall presently speak more particularly, the whole village was depopulated, leaving houses and furniture, barns, grain, stock, everything but the little bedding, food, and clothing they could pack on their sleds and carryalls, and scudding for life on the ice towards the rapids. It was a scene never to be forgotten by our young soldier. It was the first time he had ever seen war, face to face, or rather the effects of war. He had read and thought and dreamed of battles and their awful desolations; but this *miniature likeness* was his first personal view, and it sickened and saddened his heart. We will not stop to moralize, but proceed with our facts.\*

\* "MASSACRE OF RAISIN.—Proctor (Colonel) then agreed to receive a surrender on the following terms: that all private property should be respected; that sleds should be sent next morning to remove the sick and wounded to Amherstburg, on the island opposite Malden, that in the mean time *they should be protected by a guard*; and that the side arms of the officers should be restored to them at Malden. (Query: Why were their side arms taken from them at all, if treachery was not contemplated?) . . . About 12 o'clock, the prisoners were marched off. Drs. Todd and Bowers, of the Kentucky volunteers, were left with the wounded; and Major Reynolds, (an American officer and prisoner also,) with two or three interpreters, *was all the guard left to protect them*. . . . About sunrise, instead of sleds arriving to convey them to Malden, a large body of Indians, perhaps two hundred in number, came into the town, painted black and red. . . . They began first to plunder the houses of the inhabitants, and then broke into those where the wounded prisoners were lying, some of whom they abused and stripped of their clothes and blankets, and then tomahawked them without mercy. . . . The few who were judged able to march, were saved and taken off towards Malden; but as often as any of them gave out on the way they were tomahawked and left lying on the road. . . . For the massacre at the River Raisin, for which any other civilized Government would have dismissed, and perhaps have gibbeted the commander, Colonel Proctor received the rank of Major-General in the British army. . . . Proctor, after he had left the battle-ground, never named the guards nor sleds which he had promised for the wounded *Americans*; nor would he pay any attention to the subject, when repeatedly reminded of it by General Winchester and Major Madison, (prisoners.) Captain Elliot (of the British army) once replied to their solicitations, that "*the Indians were*

The Frenchmen above mentioned, young Combs understood, were Indian traders; and from their knowledge of several Indian languages and general friendly intercourse with them, they had remained, with the hope of being able to save their friends property from the torches of the enraged enemy. The family before spoken of consisted of husband, wife, and five children, the largest about twelve years old. They were distributed between a small one-horse sleigh and an ox-sled loaded with cooking utensils, food and bedding. The latter vehicle could not proceed, as all the rest had done, on the ice, because the oxen were unshod, and the owner did not know that Hull's old road by land back to the Maumee was sufficiently free from obstruction to enable him to save his family by that route. Fortunately, Combs and his companion had just traveled that way, and could assure him of its entire practicability, and that, moreover, troops were advancing by it at that very time, with whom they had encamped the previous night. Having done thus much, the dictates of ordinary prudence—the law of self-preservation, deemed by some the first law of nature—might have impelled our young officer and his companion to disencumber their pony of his pack, and with his aid have saved themselves from the much apprehended tomahawk and scalping-knife of the Indians, reeking and red as they were with the blood of their gallant associates and friends at Raisin.

But in the boys' hearts of our youthful adventurers there was a "higher law," a *duty* which they thought they owed to the army in their rear, and the helpless family in their presence, which induced them to give up the pony to the two soldiers, together with blankets to protect themselves; directing them to ride alternately, and hasten back to General Harrison with the sad tidings they had just communicated to them, and which was to blast all his cherished hopes of a successful invasion of Upper Canada that winter.

*very excellent surgeons!* . . . The prospect of their release, however, was now very gloomy, as Proctor had issued an order, *forbidding individuals to purchase any more of them, (the prisoners,) while a stipulated price was still paid for all the scalps brought in by the savages!*"—See *McAfee*, pp. 216-21.

At the same time, throwing their packs upon the ox-sled, our adventurers started the terrified family in the same direction, remaining themselves some distance in the rear, to give notice of approaching danger, and as far as possible save the mother and her children, if it should come on themselves.

Young Hensly, his Kentucky companion, had a musket; Tessier, their protégé, had a fusée or shot-gun, and Coombs himself was armed with a sword and belt-pistols. Their march was of course very slow; but it seemed to our ardent young officer that he had never before seen oxen move with such a tardy pace. They knew not at what moment their ears would be saluted with the savage war-whoop in their rear. Thus they proceeded till the road was lost in darkness, hoping to meet Major Cotgreve's battalion, and were forced to encamp by the road-side. They watched all night, one of them acting as sentinel about a hundred paces from the fire, on the trace towards Raisin, and at dawn they again resumed their slow retreat. They had not gone over two or three miles, when, instead of meeting an armed band which would give them comparative safety, they found Cotgreve's baggage-sleds and artillery abandoned in the road, with all the marks of sudden and precipitate flight. "I shall not pretend," Combs subsequently writes, "to describe our feelings at this unexpected sight; but thank Heaven we did not abandon our voluntarily assumed charge, but resolved, come what would, to save them or perish with them."

Just before sunset, they came in sight of the Maumee river, and at the same time discovered that Winchester's camp, left in charge of General Payne, some three or four miles up the river was in flames. At first they supposed that the British and Indians had gotten ahead of them by way of the lake and river ice, and had defeated the remnant of the left wing of the army and General Harrison's reinforcements, and that their own destiny was sealed. They were soon relieved however from this painful apprehension, by discovering a wounded soldier who had made his escape by that route, and assured him that no enemy had passed him.

We shall only refer to so much of the military operations about this period on that

frontier as may render the personal narrative of the subject of the memoir intelligible. The two flying soldiers to whom Hensley had promptly abandoned his pony at Combs's suggestion, and determined to aid the latter in bringing off the distressed family, had, it seems, communicated to Major Cotgreve the same alarming information they had given to Combs, "*that at least five thousand Indian warriors were in hot pursuit, under Tecumseh and Dixon,*" and thus caused his precipitate retreat. They reached General Winchester's old camp at the rapids, at which General Harrison, in the mean time, had arrived with a small body-guard early on the 23d, having travelled all night, and caused him to abandon the position north of the Maumee, set fire to the camp, and fall back to the south side of Portage river, some fifteen or twenty miles nearer the Ohio settlements on Hull's trace.

Young Combs followed in his footsteps across the river on the ice, after sundown on the 23d, and arrived on the opposite side of Portage river on the evening of the 24th, with his small caravan, much to the surprise and joy of his friends, who had already numbered him among the dead. Having been mainly instrumental in saving also three of that gallant band of Kentuckians, who had marched to the frontier some five months before, with such devoted patriotism and buoyant hopes of military glory, for the first time since he met the news of the disaster, he now felt safe from pursuit, and gratified more than words could express that he had the nerve to do his duty.

The weather had moderated, and the rain had been falling all day, so that the ice on the river had split near the centre and bulged upwards, rendering it difficult as well as dangerous to cross. But nothing could stop our young adventurer's friends, when he came in sight, from rushing across to meet him. Majors Hardin and Gano conducted him to head-quarters, and introduced him to General Harrison, informing him what he had done. "It was a proud moment for me," writes Mr. Combs, in reference to that sight, "*thus to be presented: and while he complimented me, and said I was worthy of a civic crown, his eyes were moist with tears, and mine were not dry. That tear-drop of the*

hero of Tippecanoe fell upon my heart; and my untiring support of him in 1840, when he was a candidate for the Presidency, cannot be wondered at, although my first choice then and ever had been HENRY CLAY."

"I had no time," he continues, "on my perilous retreat, to weep for my murdered friends and fellow-soldiers at Raisin. My eyes were dry and my nerves seemed rigid as iron until personal danger was over, and all under my charge in safety." Of over nine hundred officers and soldiers engaged in that disastrous battle, only thirty-three escaped; all the rest were killed on the field, massared, or led into captivity. The news filled the whole country with the deepest grief; Kentucky was clad in mourning, and General Harrison himself overwhelmed with sorrow and disappointment. Very soon afterwards, the remnant of the Kentucky regiments engaged in the conflict were discharged; but the subject of this memoir declined to leave for some time, not knowing that the invasion of Upper Canada was abandoned for the winter, till after Fort Meigs was erected, and General Harrison himself, in a complimentary note, advised him of the fact, and permitted him to return to Kentucky, with the expectation of again joining him in the spring with other volunteers. Thus ended his first campaign.

When he arrived at home, with his clothes much worn and badly soiled, his mother met him with a tear and a smile, remarking in jest, that she was surprised to see him so soon, as he had told her he would not return until they had taken Canada. His reply was, "that he had only come home to get a clean shirt." And she very soon found he was in earnest.

The defeat at Raisin, and the discharge of the remainder of the Kentucky troops, made the situation of General Harrison, and the whole north-western frontier, extremely critical. Of our old forts there remained in our possession Forts Wayne and Harrison. Fort Winchester had been erected on the site of old Fort Defiance, and General Harrison had built Fort Meigs at the foot of the Maumee Rapids, on the south side of the river. The latter was the only place at all prepared for an attack by heavy artillery; and it was to be expected that as soon as the ice on the lake and riv-

er broke up in the spring, the British, having command on the waters, and entire possession of Michigan Territory, would assail that position. It was of the first importance, therefore, to have General Harrison reinforced as soon as possible, for the fall of Fort Meigs would expose the whole north-western frontier to fire and desolation. For this purpose, Gen. Green Clay, marched from Kentucky, early in April, with two regiments of volunteers, taking the same route which General Winchester had done. Having made the necessary preparations, Combs started himself soon afterwards to rejoin General Harrison at Fort Meigs, as he had promised to do, and overtook General Clay at Dayton. Totally unprovided as that general was with maps of the vast wilderness into which he was about to plunge, the practical information which young Combs had obtained on the previous campaign, as to the geography of the country, its water-courses, newly cut roads, Indian villages, &c., &c., was deemed of much importance; and before the expedition reached Piqua, he tendered young Combs the appointment of *Captain of Spies*, with the privilege of selecting his company from Colonel Dudley's regiment. He had not expected a position so high or responsible, and felt much diffidence of his ability to discharge its dangerous duties.

The next day, another company was organized in Colonel Boswell's regiment, commanded by an old Indian fighter under Wayne, named Kilbreath; and by way of distinction afterwards, our young volunteer was called the *boy* captain. Their pay was thirty dollars per month extra; and he had no difficulty therefore, in filling his company with active gallant riflemen, but one or two of whom however had seen service.

When they reached St. Mary's block-house, General Clay divided his brigade, sending Colonel Dudley's regiment across to the Anglaise river, and descending the St. Mary's himself, with Colonel Boswell's, intending to unite them again at old Fort Defiance. Captain Combs was attached to the former; and on their march down the Anglaise, an express reached them from Fort Meigs, with the intelligence that General Harrison was in daily expectation of an attack, and urging them to proceed



with all possible dispatch. Colonel Dudley immediately summoned a council of officers to meet at his quarters, where it was unanimously resolved that General Harrison ought to be apprised of their approach, and his orders, as to the time and manner, received. How this was to be accomplished was then the question. It was fifty miles from Fort Defiance, where they expected to meet General Clay, to Fort Meigs; and it was deemed extremely hazardous for any one to attempt to open a communication between the two points, especially as no one present, except Captain Combs, knew the exact position of Fort Meigs, or had any knowledge of the intervening country. He had remained silent during the consultation, but now all eyes were turned upon him, and he felt bound to speak. "Colonel Dudley," said he "General Clay has thought proper to intrust me with an important command, attached to your regiment. When we reach Fort Defiance, if you will furnish me a good canoe, I will carry your dispatches to General Harrison, and return with his orders. I shall only require four or five volunteers from my own company, and one of my Indian guides to accompany me." As may be supposed, his offer was joyfully accepted, and the Colonel specially complimented him for his voluntary proposition, as he said he should have had great reluctance in ordering any officer upon such an expedition.

The troops encamped at Fort Defiance on the afternoon of the first of May. General Clay, meanwhile, had not arrived. Captain Combs immediately prepared for his perilous trip. The two Walkers, Paxton, and Johnson, were to accompany him, as well as the young Shawnee warrior, *Black Fish*. As they pushed off from shore at the mouth of the Auglaise, the bank was covered with their anxious fellow-soldiers; and Major Shelby remarked, looking at his watch, "Remember, Captain Combs, if we never meet again, it is exactly six o'clock when we part;" and he has since told Mr. Combs that he never expected to see him again alive.

Captain Combs would have started some hours earlier, could his frail craft have been gotten ready; for he knew it would require hard work, even with the aid of a strong current, to reach Fort Meigs before

daylight the next morning. Placing his Shawnee in the stern, with a steering-oar, and two men at the side-oars, alternately relieving each other, the Captain took his position in the bow, to take care of their rifles and direct the course to be pursued; keeping as nearly as possible in the centre of the stream, for fear of Indians on either side. By dark they had come within distinct hearing of the distant roar of heavy artillery in their front, and knew that General Harrison's apprehensions of an early assault upon his enfeebled position were verified. These sounds were new to their ears and highly exciting. It was late in the night when they struck the head of the rapids, and it seemed every moment as if their light canoe would be dashed in pieces. By lying flat on his face, the Captain could form some idea of the course of the deep channel, amid the war of waters which nearly deafened them, by seeing the foaming breakers glistening in the starlight. When they approached *Roche debout*, where they were informed there was a considerable perpendicular fall in low water, they were forced to land and haul their bark along the margin of the southern bank till they had passed the main obstruction; and daylight dawned upon them before they were again afloat. They were still some seven or eight miles above the fort, and well knew that the surrounding forests were alive with hostile savages.

When the frightful appearance of the swollen river first presented itself to the view of our voyagers, one of the men urged Captain Combs to land, and endeavor thus to get to the fort; but this plan was not to be thought of. Three other alternatives remained to him; to return and report the reason of his failure to go any further; to remain where he was during the day, and make an attempt to enter the fort the next night; or to *proceed at once*. The first plan would have been most prudent; and if he had been an old and experienced officer, of established reputation for courage, perhaps it ought to have been adopted; but he was, as he has since expressed himself, a mere boy, with but little military experience, intrusted with a most important duty at his own instance; and his aged mother's last injunction was fresh in his heart, as well as in his recollection; *he could not retreat*. If he should determine to remain where he

was during the day, they would most probably be discovered and tomahawked before night. *He therefore resolved instantly to go ahead*, desperate as the chances seemed against him, and risk all consequences. Not one of his brave companions demurred to his determination, although he told them they would certainly be compelled to earn their breakfasts before they would have the honor of taking coffee with General Harrison.

No one can well conceive his deep anxiety and intense excitement as he was approaching the last bend in the river which shut the fort from their view. He knew not but that, after all his risks, he might only arrive in time to see the example of Hull imitated, and the white flag of surrender and disgrace hung out from the walls; but instead of that, as they swept rapidly around the point, the first object that met their sight was the British batteries belching forth their iron hail across the river, and the bomb-shells flying in the air; and the next moment they saw the glorious stars and stripes gallantly floating in the breeze. "Oh, it was a grand scene," writes Captain Combs. "We could not suppress a shout; and one of my men, Paxton, has since declared to me, that he then felt as if it would take about a peck of bullets to kill him!" Captain Combs had prepared everything for action, by handing to each man his rifle freshly loaded, and in the meantime, keeping near the middle of the river, which was several hundred yards wide, not knowing from which side they would be first attacked.

He hoped that General Harrison might now and then be taking a look with his spyglass up the river, expecting General Clay, and would see them and send out an escort to bring them in. He did not know that that General was beleaguered on all sides, and hotly pressed on every point.—At first they saw only a solitary Indian in the edge of the woods on the American side, running down the river so as to get in hail of them; and they took him for a friendly Shawnee, of whom they knew General Harrison had several in his service as guides and spies. His steersman himself was for a moment deceived, and exclaimed, in his deep guttural voice, "Shawnee," at the same time turning the bow of the canoe towards him. A moment afterwards, how-

ever, when he raised the war-whoop, and they saw the woods full of red devils, running with all their speed to a point on the river below them, so as to cut them off from the fort, or drive them into the mouths of the British cannon, Captain Combs' young warrior exclaimed, "*Pattawatamie, God damn!*" and instantly turned the boat toward the opposite shore. The race between the little water party and the Indians was not long doubtful. The latter had the advantage in distance, and reached the point before the former. Combs still hoped to pass them with little injury, owing to the width of the river and the rapidity of the current, and therefore ordered his men to receive their fire without returning it, as he feared an attack also from the near shore, which would require all their means of resistance to repel. If successful, he should still have time and space enough to recross the river before he got within range of the British Batteries, and save his little band from certain destruction. The first gun fired, however, satisfied him of his error, as the ball whistled over the canoe without injury, followed by a volley, which prostrated Johnson, mortally wounded, and also disabled Paxton; not, however, before they had all fired at the crowd, and saw several tumbling to the ground. Captain Combs was thus, as a last hope, forced to run his craft ashore, and attempt to make good his way back 50 miles to Fort Winchester on the south side of the river. To some extent they succeeded. The two Walker's soon left the party, by the Captain's order, to save themselves; the Indian nobly remained with Paxton, and helped him along for six or seven miles, until he was so exhausted with the loss of blood as to be unable to travel further. Captain Combs was less fortunate with poor Johnson, who, with all his aid, could barely drag himself half a mile from their place of landing, and both he and Paxton were soon captured and taken to General Proctor's head-quarters. They even reported, as was afterwards learned, that they had killed the Captain, and showed as evidence of the fact his cloth coat, which he had thrown off, putting on in its stead an old hunting-shirt, after he had left Johnson, so as to disincumber himself of all surplus weight. His woodcraft, learned in the previous campaign, now did him good service, as it enabled



him to elude his pursuers; and after two days and nights of starvation and suffering, he again met Major Shelby and his other friends, at the mouth of the Auglaise, on the fourth of May, in the morning, after all hope of his return had been given up. The two Walkers were a day ahead of him, and his brave young Indian succeeded in making his way to his native village.

The historian *McAfee*, page 264, in speaking of another expedition of a somewhat similar character, subsequently undertaken by Major Trimble, at the instance of General Clay, thus alludes to the above:—

“To penetrate to the camp (Fort Meigs) thus exposed in an open boat, was deemed extremely hazardous. Such an attempt had already been made by Captain Leslie Combs, who was sent down in a canoe with five or six men by Colonel Dudley, on his arrival at Defiance. The Captain had reached within a mile of the fort, when he was attacked by the Indians and compelled to retreat, after bravely contending with superior numbers till he had lost nearly all his men.”

Captain Combs' mouth and throat were excoriated by eating bitter hickory buds, and nothing else, for the last forty-eight hours. His feet were dreadfully lacerated by travelling in moccasins through burnt prairies, and his body and limbs were all over sore and chafed by constant exercise in wet clothes, as he was compelled to swim several swollen creeks, and it was raining part of the time most violently. In this situation he was ordered to bed in one of the boats just preparing to descend the river with General Clay's brigade.

He could not for days afterwards eat any solid food, and yet early next morning he found they were making a landing, just above the scene of his disaster four days before, and that the two companies of spies and the friendly Indian warriors were paraded on the beach, seemingly waiting for him to come, although the surgeon had told them he was unable to leave his pallet. Colonel Dudley's regiment was soon all landed and formed in three lines, preparatory to an early engagement with the enemy, and Captain Combs was informed that the spies were to constitute the vanguard. A battle—a real battle—was to be fought! delightful thought! The British batteries were to be stormed and destroyed, while General Harrison was assaulting the Indians and their allies on the opposite side of the river. At last he would have a

chance to do something to make up for all his previous sufferings and misfortunes; and he forgot every bodily pain. In a few moments he was on his feet, dressed. He was received with a glad shout at the head of the vanguard, and commenced the march in front of the left flank, towards the enemy. Colonel Dudley himself led the attacking column, and captured the batteries from the rear, without the loss of a man. “The British flag was cut down, and the shouts of the American garrison announced their joy at this consummation of their wishes. General Harrison was standing on the grand battery next the river, and now called to the men and made signs to them to retreat to their boats and cross over, as he had previously ordered them, but all in vain.”—*McAfee*, page 270.

Just before the batteries were taken, a body of Indians lying in ambush had fired upon Captain Combs' command, and shot down several of his men. He immediately formed in front of them, posting Captain Kilbreath on the left flank, while he himself occupied the right, and maintained his ground till re-enforced by Colonel Dudley, who felt the necessity of bringing him off the ground, inasmuch as he had given him no orders to retreat, and had determined not to sacrifice him. Captain Kilbreath was killed at his post, and Captain Combs was slightly touched by a ball before he received any assistance. They soon after routed the enemy, and pursued them by successive charges of bayonet some two or three miles through the swamp. In the meantime the British had retaken their batteries, and driven off our left column, which had been left to guard them. The Indians, two, were largely re-enforced, and were trying to surround the American detachment, or, at any rate, to cut them off from their boats. Under these circumstances, a retreat was ordered, with directions again to form at the batteries, it not then being known to the party that they had been retaken. As had been the case at Raisin, and will ever be repeated with raw troops, the retreat caused much disorder and confusion, and cost the Americans most dearly, for many of the wounded were now tomahawked and scalped; among them their brave, unfortunate commander, Colonel Dudley. Captain Combs' position threw

him in the rear in this movement, and, although severely wounded in the shoulder by a ball, which remained lodged in his body, and bleeding profusely, he was enabled now and then to make a rally and drive back the painted devils, when they would be rushing up too closely upon his command. He had no idea that those in front of him had surrendered, until he found himself in the midst of the British regulars, and trampling on the thrown-away arms of the Kentucky troops. And here and thus his long-desired battle ended—a second river Raisin bloody massacre.\*

The brilliant early history of an Alexander and a Napoleon, which had ever vividly floated in his mind in glorious visions as to his own unaided military career, were now exchanged for the agonizing reality of a prisoner of war; and yet he had not half reached the goal of torturing exposure which the afternoon of that dreadful day was to bring upon him.

The pen of the historian has long since given to the world some of the leading events to which we refer, and they have, perhaps, passed from the memory of the reader; but we do not recollect ever to have seen an authentic account published from any one of the unfortunate captives, and shall, therefore proceed to give in substance that of Captain Leslie Combs. General Proctor, who owed his elevation from a colonelcy to a previous victory, stained by the most revolting atrocities, and who witnessed, if not permitted those horrid atrocities committed on the present occasion

by his Indian confederates, was afterwards dismissed from the British army for his disgraceful flight from General Harrison and *retributive justice*, at the battle of the Thames.

Immediately on the surrender of each successive squad or individual, as they arrived at the batteries, they were marched off in single file down the river towards the British head-quarters near old Fort Maumee, then in a very dilapidated condition, having been given up to us and abandoned shortly after Wayne's victory, some twenty years before that time. Very soon the Indian warriors, fresh from the conflict, (in some instances, boys and squaws,) commenced the operation of insulting and plundering the prisoners. A grim Indian on horseback, painted black and red in alternate rings around his eyes, rode up to Captain Combs and snatched his hat from his head. Soon afterwards, another rushed upon him, and, regardless of his pain, tore his coat from his back, tearing loose at the same time the bandages with which his brother had bound up his bleeding shoulder. Others robbed him of what little money he had in his pockets, not sparing even a small penknife and pocket-comb. In one instance, when he had nearly arrived at the old fort, and a "devilish-looking fellow" was handling him very roughly—the more so, perhaps, as his *honest* intentions upon the captive were unrewarded, in consequence of his having been previously cleaned out—a good-looking Canadian non-commissioned officer, as the Captain judged from his dress, interfered for his protection, and lost his life for his humanity. The Captain was hurried onwards, and suddenly observed, as he approached the fort, a number of painted warriors ranged on each side of the pass-way from the opening of a triangular ditch in front, some sixty feet or more to the old gateway of the main fortification; and on either side and among them were lying prestrate in the mud a number of human bodies, entirely naked, and in all the ghastliness of violent deaths produced by the war-club, the tomahawk, and the scalping-knife. Never before had our captive seen such a horrid sight. A man would not be able to recognize his own father or brother after the scalp had thus been torn from his head, his whole countenance would be so distorted

\* "The prisoners were taken down to the British head-quarters, put into Fort Miami, and the Indians proceeded to garrison the surrounding rampart, and amuse themselves by loading and firing at the crowd, or at any particular individual. Those who preferred to inflict a still more cruel and savage death, selected their victims, led them to the gateway, and there, *under the eye of General Proctor, and in the presence of the whole British army, tomahawked and scalped them!* . . . As soon as Tecumseh beheld it, [the carnage,] he flourished his sword, and, in a loud voice, ordered them "for shame to desist. It is a disgrace to kill a defenceless prisoner." His orders were obeyed, to the great joy of the prisoners, who had by this time, lost all hopes of being preserved. In this single act, Tecumseh displayed more humanity, magnanimity, and civilization, than Proctor, with all his British associates in command, displayed in the whole war on the north-western frontier."—*McLiffe pp. 271-2.*



ted and unnatural. There was some poetry in the great excitement of mortal strife and skill in open battle, when all were armed with deadly weapons; but here the prisoners were nearly naked, with a chilling rain and fierce hail beating upon them for the last hour, and totally defenceless, in the midst of infuriated foes bent on their destruction. There was not the slightest poetic thought in our captive's head; all now was matter-of-fact—real prose. He felt very uncomfortable, and decidedly averse to proceeding any farther, and so notified an English soldier near him; but he replied that there was no alternative, and urged the prisoner forward. During this brief delay, the prisoner in his rear stepped before him, and in another moment the work of death was done upon him. He was shot down with a pistol in the hands of the first black fiend on the left side of the terrific gauntlet, and fell across the track, which was all the way slippery with fresh shed blood. Our captain leaped over his body, and ran through into the fort *unhurt*, and found himself at once in the midst of several hundred of his fellow-sufferers, who had been equally fortunate. They were surrounded by a small British guard; but, thank Heaven! no more Indians were in sight. Whether it was our Captain's youthful appearance, his bloody shirt, or mere savage fancy that saved him, he did not know, nor stop to inquire. He again felt safe from cold-blooded massacre, whatever else might befall him. He was left to indulge this pleasant delusion for a few short minutes. Very soon, however, after the last prisoner had followed him in, by which time it seems the Indian hosts who had driven them into the net of the British had assembled around the prisoners' unsafe temporary habitation, they at once demanded that the latter should be given up to them; and being refused, they simultaneously broke in the old crumbling walls of the fort, and surrounded them on all sides, giving utterance at the same time to the dreaded war-whoop.

When the prisoners first entered the old fort, they were ordered to sit down, for fear the Indians would fire on them over the walls, which had crumbled down and were very low in some places. But as soon as the savages had burst in upon them, they all instantly rose to their feet, and an

old friend near Captain Combs proposed that they should attempt to break through the enemy and get to the river. Captain Combs showed him his crippled shoulder by way of reply, and he afterwards told the Captain that he himself could not swim, but preferred drowning to death by the tomahawk and scalping-knife, and presumed the Captain would also.

The guard quieted their apprehensions for a short time, until a tall, raw-boned Indian, painted black, commenced shooting, tomahawking, and scalping the prisoners nearest to him, and could not be stopped until he had thus dispatched and mutilated *four*, whose reeking scalps were immediately seen ornamenting his waist-belt. One of these was a private in Combs' own company, who fell so near the Captain that his blood and brains sprinkled his clothes. The shrieks of these men in their dying agonies seemed for months afterwards to ring in his ears, and the crushing in of their skulls by the repeated blows of the war-club was most horrid.

At this time, too, the immense mass of Indians around the prisoners again raised the war-whoop and commenced throwing off the skin caps which protected the locks of their guns, preparatory for immediate use. The unfortunate captives then firmly believed their time had come; and they prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible. There was a rush towards the centre, with a cry of terror, the guard calling as loudly as possible for General Proctor or Colonel Elliott to come in, or all the prisoners would be murdered. At this critical juncture, a noble looking Indian, unpainted, dressed in a hunting-shirt or frock-coat and hat or cap, came striding briskly into the midst of the surrounding savages, and, taking his position on the highest point of the wall, made a brief but most emphatic address. Combs could not understand a word of what he said; but it seemed to receive the general assent of the Indians, as was indicated by their grunts and gestures, and he knew from his manner that he was on the side of mercy. The black devil only, who had just committed the four murders, growled and shook his head; but upon receiving a stern look and apparent positive command from the speaker, whirled on his heel and departed, much to the general joy of the prisoners,

as it convinced them that the orator had power as well as eloquence. The next day Captain Combs asked of a British officer the name of the Indian who had thus interfered and saved them. He replied: "It was Tecumseh."\*

"It was the first and last time," Mr. Combs afterwards writes, "I saw this great warrior. Since the days of King Philip, no single Indian had ever possessed so much power over his race; for, from the Capes of Florida to the Lake of the Woods, he had been able to produce one simultaneous uprising of the tribes against us, in the war with Great Britain. And yet I do not think, judging by his appearance, he could at that time have passed his fortieth year. When afterwards I heard of his untimely death at the battle of the Thames, while attempting to urge forward his forces, and regain the battle which Proctor's cowardly flight had lost, I could not repress a sigh of regret, a feeling in which I doubt not all of my companions on the bloody fifth of May participated."

"The prisoners," says McAfee, page 272, "were kept in the same place (the old fort) till dark, during which time the wounded experienced the most excruciating torments. They were then taken into the British boats, and carried down the river to the brig Hunter and a schooner, where several hundreds of them were stowed away in the hold of the brig, and kept there for two days and nights," without, we are assured on the authority of Mr. Combs, either food or bedding of any kind for the wounded, or the slightest surgical attention.

Fortunately for himself, Captain Combs was on board the schooner, which was less crowded than the brig, and had the ball extracted from his shoulder by a British surgeon early the next morning; and, as soon as his name and rank were known, he was invited into the Captain's cabin, and treated with marked attention and politeness. It was there he learned that the party which had defeated him on his forlorn trip had borne back his uniform-coat in triumph, which was recognized by Paxton, and they asserted they had killed the wearer, showing some recent rents, which they averred were bullet-holes. Paxton himself, whom Captain Combs found on

board, believed he was dead, as he last saw him with the coat on his back.

The prisoners were finally liberated on parole, and sent across the lake in open boats to the mouth of the Huron river, with a wilderness of some forty or fifty miles between them and the nearest settlement in Ohio, at Mansfield. Captain Combs had neither hat nor coat, and did not exchange his shirt, although covered with mud and blood, till he reached the town of Lancaster. There they were all decently clad, and most kindly entertained by the citizens.

Late in May, he again reached his father's humble farm in Clarke county, and soon afterwards was sent to McAllister's school, near Bardstown, to improve his somewhat neglected education. It was a year or two before he was notified of his exchange; and in the meantime he had commenced the study of the law, which was to be his means of livelihood through life.

Whether it was in his blood, or that he took the disease in his early boyhood from hearing his father talk of his revolutionary services and Indian "scrimmages," certain it is that, long before he arrived at manhood, Combs used to feel as young Norval did, while with his father on the Grampian hills, an humble swain—an anxious desire for military renown. "I am not even yet," he writes, "entirely cured of the disease, and have all my life, till within the last few years, devoted a portion of my time to military tactics, in training the militia, having long since reached the highest grade. At the first tap of the drum, I instinctively catch the step, and keep it as long as the music reaches my ear."

When the Mexicans were invading Texas in 1836, '7 and '8, and General Gaines was posted on our south-western frontier, which was considered in some danger, he called upon Kentucky for help. The Governor immediately gave General Combs authority to raise ten companies, and march to his relief. He accordingly issued his proclamation, and had the offer of more than forty volunteer companies in a very short time. He selected ten, formed them into a regiment, and was ready to embark from Louisville, when the President of the United States countermanded the order, and they were discharged.

So, too, ten years afterwards, when

\*McAfee, pp. 271-2, as quoted in a former note.



rumors reached us that General Taylor was in front of a Mexican force, on the Rio Grande, of more than double his strength in point of numbers, and Congress had authorized the President to receive the services of fifty thousand volunteers, General Combs issued his general orders, commanding all the regiments under his command to assemble at their several places of annual parade, to see what could be done. The following is an extract from that order, dated May 18, 1846 :

"The Major-General does not doubt that the same noble spirit which precipitated the gallant sons of Kentucky upon every frontier where an enemy was to be found, during the late war, will again animate his fellow-soldiers; and he calls upon them, in the name of liberty and patriotism, to hasten to the rescue of the American army on the Rio Grande, to share their victories, or avenge their disasters, if any have befallen them."

Several regiments of volunteers were soon enrolled, and it was supposed by all that the command would be given to General Combs. But such was not the case. He was not in favor at Washington; and, although his proclamation was republished in the "Union," and his energy and patriotism every where complimented, none but political partisans were appointed to high offices; some of whom were made generals, who had never "set a squadron in the field," nor were fit to do it. The Constitution of the United States was, in the opinion of General Combs, violated by depriving the States of the right to officer their own militia; and he was overlooked and superseded. Again, although opposed to the annexation of Texas, as proposed and finally consummated, yet, when war was declared, he desired to see it speedily fought out, and terminated by an honorable peace. He, therefore, again made an effort to be employed in the military service, and, with this view, addressed a letter to the President, when more volunteers were called for, offering to raise a full division, if he would only allow those who were willing to risk their lives for their country to choose their own officers. He even went to Washington, and renewed the offer in person to the President and Secretary of War; but it was declined politely, yet positively. His remonstrances on the occasion were in plain English, as may be remembered, for they formed the

subject of remark by the public press at the time, and very likely Mr. Marcy has not entirely forgotten them. No one was present at their brief interview in his office. General Combs soon afterwards resigned his office, in consequence of the gross injustice which he felt had been done him. He would not consent to be treated as a mere recruiting-sergeant to raise troops for those whom he regarded as party pets, without military experience or aptitude to command in the field.

Having risen from the ranks to the office of captain in two campaigns, without the aid of friends or fortune, by repeated acts of self-devotion, Leslie Combs had returned home naked and penniless, a cripple for life. Yet he did not apply for a pension from the War Office, as did others—even Colonel Johnson who received his in full. When urged to do so, he replied, that his blood was as red, and shed as freely, as that of Colonel (afterwards Governor) Preston, of Virginia; and that, poor as he was, he would never receive a pension unless granted freely by special act of Congress, as had been done in Colonel Preston's case. But he had no friend at court; and no member of Congress looked into the matter for twenty years, when Mr. Allen, of the Lexington (Mr. Combs') district took it in hand, and the result was a report in favor of granting the pension. A bill was then, and not till then, passed by Congress, unanimously, we believe, in both Houses, which was approved by President Jackson, giving him a pension *from that date*—half-pay for life—but nothing for the past.

By the aid of a relative, who allowed him the gratuitous use of his office and books, he studied law, and obtained a license as an attorney at the age of twenty-three, and immediately went to hard work. Although far from being as well versed in his profession as he felt he ought to have been, his energy, industry, and punctuality soon procured him a large share of business, and enabled him to marry, and take upon himself the responsibility of a family.

This was his situation when the great effort was made in Kentucky to destroy HENRY CLAY, because he voted for Mr. Adams for President. His enemies in the Lexington district, and especially in Fayette county, were most violent and bitter in denouncing him; and at one time, in 1826,



thought they could at the next election certainly carry the county against him; their leader, General McCalla, having only failed by some nine or ten votes at the previous election. It was under these circumstances that Mr. Combs was urged to become a candidate for the Legislature. From his early boyhood he had been devoted in feeling to that illustrious man, looking upon him, as he ever since has done, as the "foremost man of the age," as well as the most vilely pursued, persecuted and calumniated by his enemies. Although, in a manner a stranger to him—for Combs' youth and Mr. Clay's almost continued absence from Kentucky in the public service, had given the latter no opportunity to know the former except as a passing acquaintance—Mr. Combs determined to enter upon his defense and support; and for three successive years he canvassed the county from end to end, meeting Mr. Clay's enemies every where before the people; literally taking his life in his hand, and defying them. The first year he was elected by nearly one hundred majority, and the last by about five hundred; thus placing the party in an impregnable majority. He then returned to his profession, and soon not only regained his lost clients, but also obtained many new ones.

But it was contrary to Mr. Combs' nature to be an idler, or an humble follower of any man. When, therefore, he entered upon the public service, he went earnestly to work, as he had previously done in his profession. Kentucky was at that time flooded with a depreciated paper currency, worth about fifty cents to the dollar, issued by the "Bank of the Commonwealth," an institution which owed its origin to what was then called the "Relief" party, and which afterward became the Democratic or Loco-foco party in that State. Of public improvements, the State could boast none; there were not five miles of turnpike-road within her wide borders; a railroad had not even been thought of west of the mountains. As Chairman of the Committee of Finance, at the second or third session of his membership, he digested and reported a bill, which, after a severe struggle, and some slight modification, suggested by Mr. James Guthrie, became a law, providing for the winding up, gradually and without oppression, of the whole paper system;

and no attempt has since been made to renew it.

He also devoted himself to the cause of internal improvement, advocating turnpike charters, and proposing the first one for a railroad, when even Massachusetts could only boast of one, some four miles long, from the granite quarries to Boston.

He was again a member of the Legislature in 1833-4, and, as Chairman of the Committee on Internal Improvements, reported a volume of bills, under whose salutary influence that noble State has ever since been rapidly rising in wealth, comfort, and power. His means, too, were freely contributed in taking stock; all of which has since been bestowed upon a public library in Lexington.

He was not again a candidate until 1845, when he was chosen without the trouble of a canvass, and was at that session elected Speaker of the House of Representatives. The next year his name was again presented for the same office by a large majority of the Whigs of the Legislature, but he positively declined to have it used, inasmuch as there were several highly promising young Whigs who desired it, and he was satisfied with the honor previously enjoyed. He has not since been a candidate for any State office.

Mr. Combs never asked for an executive appointment of any kind in his life, having an utter disgust to office-seeking, and being wholly averse in feeling to such self-abasement as is generally necessary to obtain favor at court.

His first demonstration as a politician and public speaker on a national scale was at the Harrisburg Whig Convention, in 1840, when Governor Metcalf and himself were the delegates for the State at large, from Kentucky. They were very desirous for Mr. Clay's nomination; and it was, in Mr. Combs' opinion, by a most unfortunate combination of circumstances and individuals, that his nomination was defeated. His never-to-be-forgotten, self-sacrificing letter to the Convention, had been handed to Mr. Combs by Mr. Archer, of Virginia; and after General Harrison's nomination, he read it to that body, with a heart full of sorrow and disappointment. The whole country was taken by surprise, and a large portion of the Whig party shocked by the injustice done to their great leader.

He had kept Mr. Clay fully advised of every step taken, of every hope and fear which he entertained, up to the final consummation of the combined efforts of General Harrison, General Scott, and Mr. Webster, which finally defeated him. He believed then, and has never doubted since the election, that Mr. Clay could easily have triumphed over Mr. Van Buren. The people were tired, sick to death of his heartless selfishness and evident incompetency, and a change was inevitable. And what a blessing it would have been to the country to have had *Henry Clay* President for the succeeding four or eight years, instead of Tyler or Polk! We need not dwell upon the facts of history, and the imaginings of such a contrast.

Although Mr. Combs' first and *only* choice had been defeated in the Convention, and by means which he boldly condemned, still, as his old commander, General Harrison, a true patriot and an honorable man, had been nominated, he determined at once on his course. He felt that he owed a duty to the Whig party, to the country, to a gallant old soldier, under whose command he had suffered many hardships, and had shed his blood on the field of battle; and he resolved to devote himself to the coming canvass.

His first public address was in Philadelphia, to an immense multitude, the Monday night succeeding the nomination. All knew his devotion to Henry Clay, and were therefore anxious to hear what he had to say for General Harrison. He had numerous clients in the crowd, who had known him for many years as an energetic, prompt, and vigilant attorney, but never dreamed that he had once been a soldier. "I shall never forget their evident astonishment," says Mr. Combs, "when I took up the military life of the hero of Tippecanoe, and spoke of its leading events as familiarly as if they had been the events of yesterday. I knew that he had been assailed as the cause of the defeat of Winchester at Raisin, and of Dudley at the Rapids; and my vindication of him from these two charges was overwhelming and conclusive. I had been so connected with both of these disastrous events, as to render my testimony irrefutable."

From that time until the succeeding November, he almost gave up his profession:

and from New York to New Orleans, from Kentucky, through Tennessee and Virginia, to Delaware, was day after day addressing large multitudes. His dress was a simple hunting shirt and sash, such as General Harrison wore at the battle of Tippecanoe, and when he first saw him afterwards; such as his father had worn when he helped Daniel Boone to drive the Indians out of Kentucky, and such as the volunteers generally wore when they marched to the frontiers during the late war.

The Whig press everywhere teemed with the highest-wrought eulogies of his speeches, and its applause might have turned the head of a man prompted by less high and holy feelings than those which influenced him. As it was, they seem only to have stimulated him to still higher efforts. He spoke on the battlements of Yorktown on the anniversary of the surrender of Cornwallis, with Seargent, and Upshur, and Wise; at Lynchburgh, a few days afterwards, with Rives, and Leigh, and Preston; at Richmond on three several nights, the last time to some thousand ladies. Thousands of living witnesses still remain to attest the effects of his addresses; while the files of the *Richmond Whig* of that day, then edited by the talented and lamented Pleasants, bear testimony to the character and effect of these appeals.

The election over, and General Harrison President, General Combs asked for nothing, and nothing was offered to him, while hundreds, who had rendered comparatively but little service, were clamorous for reward, and some of them received high offices. The real champion of the conflict—he whose morning bugle had often roused a thousand men to arms, and who never wearied, day or night, in doing his duty till the victory was won—was forgotten in the hour of triumph, while others stepped forward and enjoyed the fruits of the victory.

If Peter the Hermit felt the inspiration of his holy cause when preaching a crusade against the infidels in possession of Jerusalem, so did Mr. Combs in his against the corruptions and usurpations of power in the city of Washington. All selfishness was absorbed in his burning desire to drive the Goths from the Capitol; and he valued more highly the outpourings of public approbation which every where greeted his



efforts, than he would have done any official position which could have been offered him. The noble-hearted Whigs of little Delaware presented him with a most substantial evidence of their confidence and gratitude, by the presentation of a magnificent piece of plate, with the following inscription :

"To General Leslie Combs, of Kentucky, from a number of his Democratic Whig friends of Newcastle county, Delaware, in testimony of their high regard for him as a patriot and soldier in the Northwestern campaign of 1812 and '13, whilst yet a youth, and as the able and eloquent vindicator of his old General, the hero of Tippecanoe and the Thames, in the political campaign of 1840."

Four years afterwards, when the farmer of Ashland received the nomination of the Baltimore Convention, he again took the field, although he knew that he would thereby lose a large portion of his remaining clients and business, which had become more important to him from pecuniary embarrassment, induced by large investments in the Texan War Debt. After canvassing a large portion of Kentucky, previous to the August election, he directed himself, during the months of September, October, and November, to Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York.

He made a rapid passage through Virginia, from Abingdon, by way of Lynchburg, Richmond, and Yorktown, to Norfolk, arousing the Whigs everywhere, and urging the Democrats to stand by their noblest son, towering as he did in fame and public services as high above his competitor as the peaks of the Alleghanies above the mole-hills at their base. But all in vain. They were wedded to their idol, modern progressive Democracy.

What to them were justice, truth, gratitude, fraternal or maternal love? Henry Clay was to be immolated under the remorseless car of this modern Juggernaut; and who so proper as his own mother to use the sacrificial knife? It was done.

Mr. Combs appealed to Pennsylvania and New York to stand by and sustain the great father of the American system, the steadfast friend of human labor in all its forms, against the false traitors and pretended friends, who would certainly prostrate our rising manufactures and mechanical pursuits; but they would not heed him. They, too, cried out, "Crucify him,

crucify him!" and he was crucified. Oh, what a reckoning they have yet to settle for this outrageous wrong to America's great statesman!

Of the many scenes of deep excitement through which the subject of our notice passed during this ever-memorable campaign, we shall refer but to one of prominent interest. It occurred at New Haven, Connecticut. Mr. Combs had been invited to be present at a great Whig gathering at that renowned city, and accordingly went there at the appointed time. The principal streets were most magnificently decorated with flags and banners, bearing mottoes of appropriate significance. The crowd was innumerable, and moved by the highest enthusiasm. Senator Berren, of Georgia, first addressed them, followed by Mr. White, of New York, from a broad platform, covered by the most venerable and distinguished sons of the pilgrim fathers. "Indeed," says Mr. Combs, in allusion to this occasion, "when I looked around me, I felt as if I were in the midst of that daring band of holy men who had crossed the broad Atlantic in quest of civil and religious liberty." Instead of speaking from the stand, a light wagon was placed for him to stand in, near the centre of the crowd, so as to be better heard. He spoke about two hours. At the commencement, he had asserted his belief in an overruling Providence in all things; that there was ever present "a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will;" that He who was the orphan's father and the widow's husband had, in early life, taken an orphan boy in the Slashes of Hanover, and led him on, step by step, from one great deed to another, till now, when his history should be written, and justice done him, he would occupy a pinnacle of glory high as Chimborazo's loftiest peak, with Mount Olympus piled upon it. Like an eagle high in air, shot at by the poisoned shafts of calumny on every side, he still flies higher, and with prouder pinion, towards his mountain eyrie. "Look at him!" exclaimed the speaker, as he threw his hands upwards, and involuntarily the eyes of the multitude followed his gesture. Such a shout as instantly rent the skies was scarce ever heard before, or such a waving of handkerchiefs seen as was exhibited by the thousand ladies who were

present. Casting his eyes upwards, he beheld an American eagle some few hundred feet distant, gracefully flying towards the east. His own feelings were highly excited. He folded his arms, and, looking at it for a moment, exclaimed, in a thrilling tone of voice, "I have told you, fellow-citizens, that there were no accidents on earth or in Heaven, and I hail this as a happy omen. Fly on, and still fly higher, proud bird of my country's banner; and long may you continue to ornament the flag which waves over the land of the free and the home of the brave!" No one present will ever forget the scene.

As the Whigs of little Delaware manifested their gratitude to him by the presentation of a magnificent piece of plate in 1840, so also did those of the Empire State in 1844, with the following simple, but touching inscription:

"From the Whigs of Kings county, New York, to General Leslie Combs, of Kentucky, the friend of Henry Clay.

"November, 1844.

"Si Pergama dextra,

"Defendi possent, etiam hæc defensa fuissent."

The defeat of Henry Clay, and the election of James K. Polk, produced a profound sensation throughout America; and when the vile duplicity and falsehood of the Democratic party in Pennsylvania is remembered, where every standard was emblazoned with "Polk, Dallas, and the Tariff of 1842;" while every where in the North it was unblushingly asserted that Polk was a better protective tariff man than Henry Clay, at the same time that he was supported in the South as an advocate of free trade; it cannot be wondered at that both he and Dallas afterwards betrayed the North, and the ruinous Tariff Act of 1846 was passed, which has already prostrated some of our most important manufactures. Indeed, but for the opportune discovery of the rich gold-mines of California, we should, ere this, have had another commercial crash such as desolated the country in 1837-8; for it is indisputably true that the balance of trade for the last year has been so much against us that it has required the shipment of over sixty millions of the precious metal, as well as large amounts of United States and States stocks, to make up the deficit.

General Combs was the last man to leave

this great battle field; for, on the very day of the election in New York, he passed from Albany to New York city, and at every landing of the steamer stimulated the crowd, who were anxiously expecting the election news from Ohio, urging them to poll every vote in their power for Henry Clay, for that every thing depended on the Empire State.

Such afterwards proved to be the case; and, but for the gross frauds in the city of New York, Polk would have been defeated, and the great cause of American labor gloriously triumphant. The Empire Club did the dark deed, which has since produced such wide-spread ruin and distress in some of our manufacturing districts, especially in Pennsylvania.

A man of less sanguine temperament, or one more calculating in his friendship, and less truly devoted to Henry Clay in all his fortunes than General Combs, might have been led away by the loud shouting and deep enthusiasm naturally excited by the brilliant victories of the hero of Buena Vista, when the grateful hearts of millions of true Whigs in America throbbed with joy at the suggestion of his name in connection with the Presidential office. Even in Kentucky, multitudes of Mr. Clay's constant supporters and some of his oldest-friends avowed themselves in favor of General Taylor, as the *most available* candidate; and some men denounced Mr. Clay as selfish and ambitious; but General Combs never hesitated, never faltered.

"Faithful found among the faithless;  
Faithful only he amid innumerable false."

"Unmoved, unshaken, unseduced, unterrified."

And so he continued till the last moment in Philadelphia, when the National Whig Convention decided in favor of General Taylor.

Fatigue, loss of rest, anxiety of mind, had by this time prostrated General Combs on a sick-bed; yet, when Independence Square was in the evening filled by tens of thousands of anxious Whigs, mainly the devoted friends of Henry Clay, it was deemed most important to have an address made by General Combs, the long-tried and ever-faithful friend of that illustrious man. It was a severe trial for him to encounter; yet, when lifted to the stand,

he pronounced that brief and most thrilling address, which was at the time listened to in breathless silence, and given on the lightning's wings to the utmost corners of the United States. But no report of it could do justice to the impressive manner and evidently deep emotions of the speaker, while he seemed to feel that he was giving up for ever the hope of his whole life to see *Henry Clay President of the United States*.

Considering the success of the Whig cause as above all other considerations, he pursued the same course in 1848 that he had done in 1840. From Maine to Indiana his voice was every where heard in private circles and in public assemblages of the people, urging all to unite in the support of General Taylor; and hundreds of thousands yet live to testify to the power and effect of his speeches.

Neither General Harrison nor General Taylor ever forgot (we will not say forgave) his unalterable attachment and adherence to Mr. Clay; and although he did more for each *after his nomination* than any other one man in America did, they acted towards him as if they only remembered his opposition to their nomination by the Whig party. They never evinced the slightest gratitude for his efficient and disinterested advocacy of their claim before the people. But that may be allowed to pass. Mr. Combs had his own self-approbation, and the high confidence of the great Whig party, and they were infinitely more valuable than court favor and official patronage.

We come now to Mr. Combs' last political campaign; and shall treat it briefly. His competitor was allied by blood and marriage to several numerous wealthy and influential Whig families in the district; had been himself a Whig in early life; was the present pride and hope of the Democracy; and thus concentrated all their support. General Combs had no such extra aid or sympathy in the canvass. The mass of the Whigs believed he was invincible, and that therefore they need make no effort. In a long professional career he had made some personal enemies among the Whigs, who took this occasion to gratify personal vengeance at the sacrifice of political principle. Some hundreds of the first class did not go to the polls. A few of the latter were active and violent

against him, and he was defeated. But he died on the plateau of the battlefield, in the front rank of the Whig army, with the Whig banner around him as his winding-sheet. He sustained the Union, the Compromise, the cause of American labor and internal improvements, as presented by Millard Fillmore; and he would rather thus have fallen than have achieved victory by any sacrifice of principle or personal independence. Those who fly from the battle-field, and those who hide in the ravines and ditches while the balls are flying thickest, are disgraced by defeat, and not the leader who bravely fights and falls in the combat. Among the many high and honorable names recorded in his support are those of *Henry Clay* and *J. J. Crittenden*. Mr. Combs has no complaints to make against those who failed to do their duty. He feels that his is still obvious: to hold on to Whig principles only the more firmly because the timid and treacherous abandon them.

He has ever preached and endeavored to practice the philosophy that the world was intended by its Creator to be governed, not by force and violence, but by *love* and *truth*—love, embracing all benevolence of thought and act, and truth in deed as well as in word. To his rigid observance of these two great moral landmarks may be attributed the remarkable effect of his public speeches. He never berated or denounced bitterly his opponents. He lectured them, criticised them, and endeavored to refute their arguments in good temper; and he never uttered a word on the stump which he did not believe to be true, nor expressed a sentiment which he did not most sincerely entertain.

When he commenced life, he set himself to work first to attain pecuniary independence by his own labor, and, second, to do all the good he could to all around him. His first production, which went to the press more than thirty years ago, was an argument and appeal in favor of a lunatic asylum in Kentucky. There was not one then west of the mountains, and only three or four in America. A few humane men in Lexington took up the subject, and the result was the commencement of the present magnificent establishment, which has ever since been dispensing its blessings in the State.



At a later date, he aided the public library by a large donation, considering his limited means; stimulated the establishment of public free-schools; and a female orphan asylum; all of which are now conferring inestimable benefits upon the community. Not a church has been erected in Lexington, for whites or blacks, to which he did not contribute his mite. In 1833, he passed through the severest ordeal of his life. When the Asiatic cholera first made its appearance on this continent, (in Canada, we believe,) scattering death in its path and all around, an almost universal panic seized upon the public mind. The alarm seemed to increase according to the distance from the scene of its first desolation, and prevailed to a great extent the community of General Combs' residence as well as others, although the medical faculty there assured the people that they were in no danger; that their position was so elevated and healthful, that if it should even "rain pestilence upon them, it would run off." The consternation of the community may be easily imagined, when, in June, 1833, that mysterious disease burst forth in all its fury in their midst, sparing neither age nor sex; old men and children, master and slave, seeming alike subject to its sudden and fatal visitation. Its first known demonstration was in General Combs' own family, upon the person of a favorite servant, who died in a few hours; thence it spread among his immediate neighbors. Thousands fled to the mountains, leaving their houses deserted or in care of their slaves, who, being thus abandoned, became more alarmed, and consequently more liable to the fell disease. Many thought it contagious, and would not even visit their relatives and dearest friends. A high duty seemed to devolve upon Mr. Combs. With a calm and determined front he met it, and went to work to study the disease, endeavor to arrest its progress, and relieve its subjects. He never stopped, except for brief periods of rest, day or night, for more than thirty days, devoting himself wholly to the sick and suffering; rich and poor, black and white, bond and free, friend and foe, alike received his services, sometimes in the most menial and disgusting offices at their bedsides. It may be justly claimed for him that he was the instrument of hope, of relief, of prolonged life to many.

He had a full sweep of vengeance upon his enemies—he had a few such—and upon his political persecutors, by helping them when they could not help themselves, and felt as if they were abandoned by every friend on earth. "It was a glorious triumph," is the language of Mr. Combs. "I would not now exchange it for a victory on the battle field, or the highest political promotion—so help me God!"

The entire population of Lexington was almost decimated in a month. Mr. Combs had met the British and the Indians in hostile array; had been wounded, and a prisoner, subjected to every savage barbarity; but he had never before found such a foe as the cholera of 1833, so horrid, relentless and terrific, in act and aspect. His escape from it, exposed as he was, seemed almost miraculous; for he was not touched till near the close of the season of the epidemic, and then not very violently. His health is still perfect, and he retains all the vigor and elasticity of early manhood.

In all the relations of life, General Combs has discharged the obligations growing out of those relations with scrupulous fidelity. Enterprising and public-spirited, he has ever been among the foremost in promoting any scheme having for its object the public good, and has liberally used his means in contributing to every project calculated to advance the public prosperity. As a member of the Legislature of Kentucky, and Chairman of the Committee of internal Improvements in 1833, he strenuously advocated a system of internal improvements, which by his influence, was partially adopted, and which has done much towards placing the State in its present high position. As a private citizen, within the last few years he has devoted himself to the work of arousing the public mind to the importance of railroad communication; and by his addresses, and through the press, has done more, perhaps, than any other man, in awakening the people of Kentucky to the necessity of prompt and vigorous action in this behalf. The result is seen in the various lines of road projected and now under progress, and by which the entire State will, in the course of a few years, be traversed. Such indeed has been his characteristic energy and zeal in matters of this sort, that when

any thing was to be done, he was looked to, to take the lead.

He has ever been, emphatically, the poor man's friend; and never was an appeal made to him in vain in behalf of suffering humanity. During one of his tours in the Presidential campaign of 1844, he chanced to stop at a country church in Virginia, and heard the pastor deliver his farewell sermon, in the course of which some remarks were made in reference to the pecuniary embarrassment which forced the separation of this old shepherd from his flock. Upon the return of General Combs home, he immediately enclosed a sum of money to this old minister, whom for the first and last time he saw but a few minutes on that Sabbath, and to whom he was an entire stranger. Accident made the writer of this acquainted with this circumstance, a knowledge of which has hitherto been confined to the parties to it and himself. A favorite plan of benevolence with General Combs has been to assist in bringing forward poor young men of talent, assisting them in their studies, recommending them to public favor, and aiding them in getting a start in their pro-

fession; and more than one has had reason to thank the good fortune that threw them in his way.

In 1833, while the cholera was raging with extreme violence in Lexington, one of its first victims was a bitter personal enemy; and yet, while fear drove others from his bedside, General Combs nursed him with all the care and tenderness of a devoted friend. The annual election for members of the General Assembly came on a short time after the pestilence had subsided, and the citizens of Lexington and Fayette county testified their gratitude for his humane exertions by bestowing upon him their unsolicited suffrages, and electing him a member of the Legislature.

The writer of this has had opportunities which few have enjoyed of studying thoroughly the character of the subject of this sketch, and it affords him the highest gratification to bear testimony to his unbending integrity, his firmness of purpose in maintaining the right at every hazard, his manly independence, his benevolence of disposition, and, in short, all those high qualities which make up the true man—the noblest work of God.







WERT BOOKBINDING

JAN 1989

Grainville, PA

